

Coping Strategies by Men Exposed to Gender-Based Violence in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study sought to establish coping Strategies by men exposed to gender-based violence in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. The study was prompted by the fact that many similar studies concentrated on GBV to female partners and therefore the existing gap needed to be filled. The study employed a prolonged field engagement through in-depth interviews. While Dar es Salaam Region consists of five municipalities, this study was conducted in Kisutu ward, Ilala Municipality owing its strategic location in the city with big populations and large social interactions. Through snow ball sampling technique, 25 men were sampled as respondents and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study concluded that men used various coping strategies such as counselling services, religious services, suicide attempts and self-harming, alcohol and drug abuse, divorce, vacating home for sometime, tolerating, turning to authorities and having another partner/ second wife to cope up with GBV experiences. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that responsible stakeholders like the government, communities, religious institutions as well as families and individuals should work collaboratively towards supporting affected men through education and sensitization which aim at helping the men to cope more effectively with all forms of GBV. There is a need for collaborative efforts to identify violence types conducted to men and reasons for the same so as to find better ways of curbing the experiences.

Keywords: Gender-based violence; coping strategies; counselling; suicide; self-harming; Dar es Salaam.

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Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is referred to as sexual, physical, mental or financial harm committed against an individual or a group of individuals because of their gender identity (Council of Europe, 2019). GBV can take different forms including threats of violence, coercion and sexual or economic exploitation. The term GBV refers to any harm done to a person as a result of unequal power dynamics caused by the social roles that are assigned to males and females. Data on GBV primarily among women are shockingly revealed in the World Bank report that 35% of women worldwide have been victims of non-romantic or intimate partner sexual violence. Around the world,

38% of women's murders are committed by intimate partners and 7% of women have experienced sexual assault by someone other than a partner (World Bank, 2019).

Gender-based violence has immediate and long-term effects to a victims. Given that GBV negatively affects victims' ability to develop as individuals and function well in society, GBV has a significant impact on national economy and productivity. Victimization may lead to homelessness and weaken social ties among families, friends and co-workers, pushing victims of crimes further into suffering (Council of Europe, 2019).

Following the negative effects of GBV on both individuals and communities, initiatives have been

made by various actors to change the situation. International treaties like the 1993 UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women have been adopted on a global scale. Additionally, the United Nations organization for gender equality and women's empowerment (UNWOMEN) has collaborated with partners around the world to improve data collection in order to provide a better understanding of the nature, scope and effect of violence against women and girls. These partners include UN agencies, government ministries and departments, civil society organizations and religious institutions, just to mention few. The main role of mentioned partners include education and awareness to individuals and communities on how to overcome and eliminate all forms of GBV by creating more resilient and respectful relationships among people with different gender and colors. These efforts have been specifically aimed at preventing all forms of violence (Mc Carrick et al, 2016; UN-WOMEN, 2020).

Tanzania's Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children has addressed GBV issues by creation of pertinent plans and policies through Regional and Council Health Management Teams (Simmons, et al, 2019). Representatives from the social welfare department and the private sector and the national coordination unit against gender-based violence have been established. As part of a multi-sectoral strategy to end the practice, campaigns against gender-based violence in Tanzania have been incorporated into HIV prevention programs. However, the majority of important national and international stakeholders, including UN-Women, Tanzania Women's Lawyers Association (TAWLA) and Tanzania Gender Networking Program (TGNP) have concentrated on empowerment of women than their male counterparts, rendering those organizations and related initiatives irrelevant to male victims.

Given the aforementioned uneven efforts, GBV has persisted among men. While Fleming et al, (2015) confirm that GBV among men exists as a practice that has occurred throughout the world, Kayombo et al (2019) revealed that,] since GBV among men is a global trend, it has also affected men in Mwanza-Northern Tanzania. The study further, suggested that it is appropriate time for the government and gender stakeholders to re-think about new strategies of promoting gender equality by raising

Tanzanians' awareness about gender related issues. (Kayombo, et. al., 2019; Fleming et al, 2015).

Few studies have examined GBV against men, despite the fact that it is common and has serious impact on men (Hines, 2015; Perryman & Appleton, 2016; Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2014; Hines & Douglas, 2010) Furthermore, despite the fact that gender-based violence affects both men and women, the majority of research on the topic has primarily focused on women. Unrelated to female partners, another line of research has concentrated on GBV in general ways on men (Barbelet, 2022, Kayombo, et al 2019; Fleming et al, 2015). Focusing on GBV among women and girls may cause people to forget that men and boys can also become victims of GBV. It is also held that the prevalence of GBV among men today may be higher than previously believed (Hines, 2015; Perryman & Appleton, 2016). Additionally, despite numerous campaigns to stop GBV, men have still been the targets of it and have had trouble overcoming it (Mtaita et al 2021). There is a lot of literature that discusses how women and children cope with GBV but very limited literature has discussed how men who are victims of GBV do cope with the situation (Center for Hope and Safety, 2011; Durham, 2020; International Committee for Red Cross, 2022; Gweba, 2021). This study, therefore, sought to fill the gap by unveiling coping strategies by men exposed to gender-based violence in Dar es Salaam Tanzania.

Literature Review

Existing literature has proved that Gender-based violence has been a common phenomenon in many communities, women and children facing various forms of abuse such as economic violence, physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence (Oladepo et al, 2011). However, recent literature has confirmed that men are increasingly becoming victims of Gender Based violence (Athuman & Munishi, 2022; Muunguja, 2021). Like women, men are experiencing almost all forms of GBV particularly physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse but the magnitude of male abuse is still unknown as it is not reported or is under reported (Athuman & Munishi, 2022); Durham, 2020).

Literatures on GBV focuses primarily on abuses committed against women, girls and children and this stems from a traditional fact and believes that in the patriarchy societies, women and girls are likely to face higher risks of GBV than men. However,

currently cases of GBV against men is increasing in many societies. It is therefore a high time to research on GBV among men and explore coping strategies men employ against GBV (Shair et al 2019; Athuman & Munishi, 2022). Limited literature has focused on nature, consequences and strategies for coping with GBV among men. Athuman and Munishi (2022) explored gender based violence of male partners by female partners and found that men experienced a lot of GBV and they tended to look for alternative ways to overcome it. Quinones (2016) looked into the effect of GBV among men and noted a range of consequences including trauma, permanent disability, stress, fear, increased forms of violence, suicide, alcohol consumption and drug abuse.

Most of literature on coping with GBV covers women and children. For example, studies by Yusof et al (2021) in Malaysia revealed that women involved in GBV employed such coping strategies as divorce, positive thinking and pursuit of formal and religious services. Similar strategies were observed in Kenya's Kibera slum, where many women used endurance and faith as coping strategies for GBV as well as in Brazil where women who experienced various forms of gender based violence resorted to counselling and spiritual healing (Swart, 2011; Chadambuka, 2022). In Nigeria, people facing GBV are regularly consulting religious services or spiritual guidance as coping strategy (Oke, 2021). Other studies show that women in the Brazilian State of Bahia coped through the use of alcohol and drugs (Carvalho et al 2019; Kippert 2019).

Hill (2009) and Kippert (2019) clearly stipulated that coping strategies to GBV can be either negative or positive. Their studies suggested that positive strategies are those that aim to assist a victim in remaining safe and dealing directly with the problem. Examples of positive strategies include seeking social support, problem-solving efforts, and information. Negative coping strategies include those that can result in loss or destruction. Examples are withdrawing, resignation, self-denial, self-criticism, aggression, use of alcohol or drugs, self-harm and suicide attempts. In the same line, Sere et al. (2021) revealed that in South Africa, people who face victimization in domestic violence adopt different approaches towards coping with GBV such as advice from elder members of the family or society, comfort and understanding from others. On the other hand, Lysova et al (2022) added more coping strategies adopted by victims of

GBV such as emotional regulations, problem avoidance or distraction in which victims of violence shift their minds from rethinking about the problem.

Women in Northern Tanzania used engagement and disengagement coping strategies to deal with GBV (Mtaita et al., 2021). Active opposition, leaving covert resistance, seeking help and violence are examples of engagement strategies. The aforementioned tactics work to maintain agency and balance power and to alter abusive behaviors. Disengagement tactics are described in terms of avoidance, passive reactions and palliative reactions (Annapoorna et al., 2022). The mentioned strategies have been used by women, depending of nature of violence and circumstances. For instances, women adopted engagement strategies when dealing with economic violence and disengagement in sexual violence (Annapoorna et al, 2022).

Coping strategies employed by men who falls victims to GBV are not yet extensively revealed by many studies. The patriarchy system has made it hard for men to reveal GBV challenges they face, and for this reason, many victims have gone unreported or underreported (Fleming et al., 2015; Athuman & Munishi, 2022; Emeka & Lyasova, 2021). The current trends indicates that GBV against men is increasing and the coping strategies adopted by those who fall victims are not very far from strategies adopted by women (Durham, 2020). Many studies on GBV coping strategies focused on approaches adopted by women and children to cope while there is limited literature that narrates the understanding of approaches to cope applied by men in GBV situation. This study, therefore, intended to fill the gap by dealing with coping strategies and resilience implications among men exposed to gender-based violence in Dares salaam Tanzania.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative approach as it intended to receive respondents' inner views, opinions and perceptions on the topic under study. Decision to use this approach was further justified by the fact that a considerable number of studies on GBV used the quantitative approach that tends to leave behind a lot of useful information. Therefore, the use of a qualitative approach would be critical in bridging this knowledge gap.

Population and Sampling

While Dar es Salaam Region consists five municipalities namely Ubungo, Kinondoni, Ilala, Kigamboni and Temeke, this study was conducted in Ilala Municipality owing its strategic location in the city with big populations and large social interactions. Snow ball sampling technique was employed to attract 25 men as respondents. This method was considered relevant due to the sensitivity of the study, considering that not all respondents were ready to share information publicly. In this case, key informants assisted to recruit other subjects as suggested by Nikolopoulou (2022). Data was collected using the in-depth interview.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The researchers transcribed the data collected and thereafter the Swahili manuscripts were translated into English Language, typed and saved as documents in a rich text format. Thematic analysis was conducted with the aid of MAXQDA 10 [VERBI Software, Marburg, Germany]. In order to obtain meaningful content, the researcher read through the interview transcriptions several times to familiarize themselves with the data.

Ethical Considerations

Due to involvement of human subjects, the researcher acquired a research permit from the College of Business Education, the Dar es Salaam Regional Administrative Secretary and other local authorities in the sampled municipalities. The researcher ensured that names, identity and information provided by respondents remained confidential. No name of respondent was revealed in the final report.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses finding of the study. It was guided by the following research question: What coping strategies are used by male partners to cope up with gender-based violence exposed to them in Dar es Salaam?

Counselling Services

Findings revealed that counselling is one of coping strategies used by respondents. Victims affirmed to have solicited counselling services from non-governmental organizations, social welfare department and friends or families. Some respondents attested to have received counselling services from religious leaders, as one respondent reported that;

After failing to speak the same language with my wife, I decided to take the matter to our religious leader who summoned us and provided counselling sessions to two of us. After the counselling, it seemed like my wife had returned to a normal situation. So I got some relief for sometime. But after very short time, she resumed the same behavior of embarrassing me even in front our kids. This situation made me uncomfortable to stay at home.

Another respondent added that

When it is difficulty to communicate the victimization to religious leaders, we used to turn to our close and most trusted family members like our grandfathers or grand mothers who have enough wisdom and who can advise and counsel us on the way forward. Elders in most cases keep secret and they have enough experiences on matters related to marital conflicts and how to handle violence at family level.

It was further added that

In case the GBV matter is not well addressed by close and the most trusted family member, the matter can be referred to community elders who are regarded as people with high level of wisdom and can provide good advice and always helps the victims to make better decisions concerning the prevailing GBV situation.

These findings are consistent with those by Swart (2011), Yusoph et al. (2021) and Chadambuka, (2022) who asserted that GBV victims resort to counselling services from close and trusted family members, religious leaders or community leaders.

Religious Services

It was revealed that men affected by GBV sought for religious services as coping strategies. They believed that seeking religious solace would ransom them from the violence. One of victims had this to report:

Every time I am discouraged by my partner, I choose to stay close to God because He can do anything to change my life. Through prayer, I feel as if everything in my life is resolved. The church is where one can have true friends who you can

share part of one's challenges and they can help one through advise and testimonies of what they had experienced before and how they coped. Words of encouragement and sometimes moral and material support can be obtained from church members.

Existing literature supports the fact that religion services are useful for GBV victims as they help the victims with spiritual guidance and comfort, shelter, food, psychological and moral support that can provide short and long term solutions (Shair et al., 2019; Oke, 2021; Swart, 2011; Yusof et al, 2021 & Annapoorna et al, 2022). Similar coping strategies were observed among women in Kenya's Kibera slum (Swart, 2011 & Chadambuka, 2022).

Suicide Attempts and Self-harming

Findings revealed that some GBV victims resorted to some self-destructive strategies such as suicide and other forms of self-harm to cope with violence. Particularly, one of respondents uttered the following statement in support of this claim:

When things get too difficult, I consider suicide but who will care for my lovely children? Women are very dangerous creatures; they are difficult to understand men's challenges in fighting for a better life for their families. I sometimes regret marrying, wishing that if time could turn back, I could have another life and leave this woman. I feel ashamed when my neighbors and friends notice how my partner treats me. With all these pain, I feel like I should kill myself.

This is supported with several studies by Hill (2009), Quinone (2019) and Kippert (2019) who in different times realized that victims who have lost hope as a result of GBV victimization used negative coping strategies such as self-harm, suicide and other practices such as self-denial which devalued their humanity and exposed them to greater dangers like aggression, self-criticism and resignation which ultimately forces them to commit suicide or self-harm.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Some respondents stated that they used alcohol and drugs to cope with GBV. These respondents were unaware of counselling services and were unable to obtain the services from those around them. Some of the GBV Victims stated,

Sometimes alcohol or drugs causes most men to spend long hours in glossaries drinking, playing pool or watching football at least to refresh their minds before returning home for more chaos. When you have several bottles of alcohol, you tend to forget your challenges and feels afresh, though when you wake up in the morning, you find problems are still there! This is what makes some men drunkard. They tend to add more bottles even before eating.

Another victim added: "some men become so weak due to hunger and much alcohol and once they become saturated with different types of alcohol, they decide to turn to drugs in order to forget family or relationship challenges they are facing every day."

This is one of risky strategies employed by men who become victims of GBV and find themselves in a state of inebriation and in some cases drug abuse. This could be one of engagement strategies used by men to deal with stress and pain (Annapoorna et al., 2022). Victims of GBV tend to use alcohol or drugs so as to forget or get relief from various forms of stress they face; unfortunately, some become addicted and become a burden to their family, community and the nation as a whole (Carvalho, et al., 2019).

Divorce

Some men coped with gender violence by divorcing their female partners. One of victims revealed that "I think to divorce her because I cannot tolerate insults and I don't want noises every day."

Therefore, divorce appears to be a coping strategy used by men in response to excessive GBV acts. Some religious faiths discourage divorce because they believe marriage was created by God and should be protected from dissolution by any means possible. Unfortunately, GBV currently fuels divorce because some issues are so difficult to tolerate. Existing literature supports that divorce is one of coping strategies used by partners affected by GBV (Quinones, 2016; Yosuf et al. (2021).

Vacating Home for Sometime

A strategy of temporarily leaving the house and staying away from family was closely related to divorce. One of respondents revealed that "I spend most of my time away from home talking about life and how we can make money." Another respondent

said, “men tend to stay away from their partners for several days, believing that when they return, everything will be calm.” Literature indicates that fill in time is a GBV coping strategy in which victims choose to stay away from the perpetrator until they feel safe to return (Yosuf et al., 2021). Taking a vacation away from home from time to time can be considered a positive coping strategy because it prevents further violence, injury or harm as a result of abuse (Hill, 2009). This tactic is related to endurance since it requires someone to refrain from activities that they used to love, see or participate in on a daily basis.

Tolerating

Tolerating violence among men who are victims of GBV is a common practice as a result of a patriarchal system in which men are viewed as strong and fearless. Regardless of family situation, they must care for the family and fulfil their roles as husbands and fathers. One of respondents revealed that “I constantly listen to and tolerate my wife's abuse and have decided to calm down because my decision to move out or make any other difficult decision will cost the entire family life in both economic and social aspect.”

The person added that “men, in most cases, tolerate GBV in order to maintain their families, particularly their children or to maintain their social status and as a result, many cases of GBV against men go unreported or under-reported.” The responses colludes with Lysova et al (2020) that men who face GBV tend to tolerate the violence and cases of such nature are not reported or are underreported.

Turning to Authorities

Authorities like police, local governments and court systems are in place to support victims of different types of GBV. The mentioned institutions are open and are free to offer services to victims and ensure they create peace, equality and strong families. Men who fall victims to GBV when asked about the services quality of those institutions they had a slight negative perception about the services. One of them revealed that

Sometimes you may report the abuse to police or local government and find yourself at the hands of law as a criminal or get abused with words that discourage you more. So, the easiest way is not to report the cases of abuse to those institutions, rather to find other means with regards to prevailing situation so as

to rescue yourself from being abused by the partner.

The establishment of Tanzania police gender desk, for instances, aims at supporting women and children who face GBV (Gweba, 2021). To cope with GBV, men at some point in time opt for turning to authorities, particularly local government offices near their homes, police or to legal services. This is just opted when things have gone far and men fail to tolerate the victimization any more. However men face many challenges when consulting those authorities since they are treated in a negative ways (Lysova et al, 2020). As a result, men develop negative perspective with police and court system when it comes to issues of reporting about abuses they face from their partners because it has been considered that men are perpetrators of GBV, hence the police and courts tends to favor women and children by offending men (Emeka & Lysova, 2021).

Another Partner/ Second Wife

To relive themselves from psychological pains, some men who fell victims to GBV opted to have a secret affairs with other woman or sometimes they decided to marry a second wife. One of them ascertained that:

When life with my partner at home become turbulent, I just find somewhere to relax and keep myself free. So I need a company of a partner who I can talk to for comfort. To this point, I find myself with another relationship. Having an extra or another partner in life is a challenge as you have to be responsible to two or more families, which makes you divide what you have like money to satisfy the needs of all your partners. Despite temporal relational relief you can get from the new partner, after sometimes, you may find another challenge as in a previous relations.

This method is challenged by literature which indicates that extra marital affair is among contributing factors to GBV as it disrupts family love and care. Yet some men use this as a coping strategy to relieve themselves from GBV experiences they encounter (Yosuf et al., 2021).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study concludes that men used various coping strategies to curb the GBV challenges. Strategies

used include counselling services, religious services, suicide attempts and self-harming, alcohol and drug abuse, divorce, vacating home for sometime, tolerating, turning to authorities and having another partner/ second wife. Much as some of these strategies provided men with the relief they needed, some of the strategies were short lived as well as destructive. Suicide attempts, self-harm, alcohol, drug abuse and divorce are among destructive coping strategies to GBV that may cause loss of the loved ones or long-term personality destruction.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, it is recommend that responsible stakeholders like the government, communities, religious institutions as well as families and individuals should work collaboratively towards supporting affected men through education and sensitization which aim at helping the men to cope more effectively with all forms of GBV. There is a need for collaborative efforts to identify violence types conducted to men and reasons for the same so as to find better ways of curbing the experiences.

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